

NSC BRIEFING

6 January 1959

**NASIR, IRAQ AND THE COMMUNISTS**

- I. While Nasir's propaganda machinery continues to assault the Arab Communists, his police last week took the strongest action to date against them.
  - A. Nasir's security services have raided Communists before, but hitherto picked up few top leaders and left untouched sympathizers in press and radio.
  - B. Arrested early on 1 January were 211 Egyptian Communists from all three of the factions into which CP is split in Egypt, and a similar roundup, of about 530 Communists at last count, has occurred in Syria. Bakdash apparently got away.
    1. This time, arrestees include leaders, and party presses have been seized as well; arrestees are to be or have been exiled to oasis in Western Desert.
    2. Nasir is reported planning housecleaning of pro-Communists in radio system; information ministry, and press generally. However, he does not plan to move against some prominent sympathizers on the ground that they are merely "opportunists."
- C.  we note he waited until Aswan Dam aid agreement signed with USSR before ordering arrests, planned weeks earlier, to take effect.

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

II. Nasir has said his anti-Communist moves aimed essentially at Iraq, where he hoped both to develop pressure on Qasim and at same time encourage him to free himself from Communist support.

A. Pressure, in form of numerous violent street clashes between pro-UAR Baathists and Communists, has indeed developed and may become serious public security problem, playing into hands of any group--Communists, civilian independents, or army--who believe themselves able use chaos as justification and opportunity for coup.

B. Qasim himself, however, shows no sign of dropping Communists,

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2. Although anti-Communist cabinet ministers, such as Foreign Minister Jomard and Information Minister Shanshal, have tried to resign, Qasim has made it clear there can be no resignations from this cabinet.

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- III. D. Overall picture in Iraq thus remains one in which severe struggle is going on, but where Communists and those, like Qasim, who may hope to use them, hold the upper hand. Symptomatic are continuing arrivals of assorted Soviet "technical experts."
- E. Most disappointing feature, from Western standpoint as well as Nasir's, is failure of moderate military commanders to exert themselves to greater extent. It is not clear whether they have been lulled into false sense of security by the fact that Communists have been careful not to attack them, or whether they in fact now feel too weak to play a decisive part.

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